

To the Co-Chairs and Members of the Public Safety and Security Committee:

Testimony SUPPORTING SB. 217, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A HATE CRIMES INVESTIGATIVE UNIT WITHIN THE DIVISION OF STATE POLICE AND REQUIRING DEVELOPMENT OF A REPORTING SYSTEM, BEST PRACTICES AND A MODEL INVESTIGATION POLICY FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT UNITS REGARDING HATE CRIMES.

Public Safety and Security Committee Public Hearing

March 3, 2022

Submitted by Carley Taft, resident of Simsbury, CT

Representative Horn, Representative, Osten and esteemed members of the Public Safety and Security committee.

I am Carley Taft, a resident of Simsbury Connecticut and a graduate student at the University of Connecticut months away from graduating with a master's degree in social work with a concentration in community organizing. I am testifying in support of SB 217

The rise in hate crimes we have seen nationally and in our state has been extremely troubling, even more troubling is the lack of accountability the perpetrators face. Last year alone there were 110 hate crimes in our state, mostly based on race, and 66 of the perpetrators were never identified. This is not solely because of the inability to identify the perpetrators, this is also because of lack of reporting. The Department of Justice Hate Crime Report released in 2017 found that between 2011 and 2015, 54% of violent hate crimes went unreported. We have seen a rise in REPORTED numbers of crimes, but what about all of those that have not been reported because the victims may feel fearful of their privacy being protected, being "outed," jeopardizing immigration status, deportation, humiliation or shame, or cultural and language barriers. These communities would greatly benefit from a trusted unit that works to build a relationship within communities impacted most by hate crimes.

This state has made great strides to end this epidemic of hate. Connecticut is leading our country as One of 16 states that include hate crime legislation for race, national origin, religion, sex/gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and disability. Last year Governor Lamont established the The Connecticut Hate Crimes Advisory Council to develop programming to increase awareness and encourage reporting of hate crimes among other duties.

This bill also aims to develop a reporting system, best practices and a model investigation policy. This will aid officers to best address traumatized victims with techniques to reassure them and provide safety, and use their relationships established to provide community and department resources. The reporting aspect will aid social workers such as myself to create and implement programming targeted not only for survivors, but also community programs to help decrease the motivations behind these crimes.

By creating a hate crime investigative unit Connecticut will be solidifying our stance that hate is not welcome here and send the message to our communities that these crimes will be investigated aggressively and by those with expertise. The intent of the perpetrator is to send a message to the victims and their communities that they are not safe. Victims of hate crimes are especially vulnerable, traumatized and terrified. The entire community often feels the same

trauma, frustration and powerlessness the victim does. We need to hold those committing these acts of terror accountable. The lack of accountability will only embolden the perpetrators and escalate the violence.

Thank you for your time.